

**Mill Creek C&H Allotment
2015 Annual Operating Instructions**

Salmon-Challis National Forest
Lost River Ranger District
PO Box 507
Mackay, Idaho 83251

Approved By:	<u>/s/ Diane L Weaver</u>	<u>4/13/2015</u>
	Diane L. Weaver	Date
	District Ranger	
Prepared By:	<u>/s/ Joshua L Edwards</u>	<u>4/13/2015</u>
	Joshua Edwards	Date
	Rangeland Management Specialist	
Accepted By:	<u>/s/ Rocky Ross</u>	<u>4/10/2015</u>
	Rocky Ross	Date
	Permittee	

Please sign and return this page to the above address

Mill Creek C&H Allotment 2015 Annual Operating Instructions

Below is your Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) for the Mill Creek Allotment. This AOI addresses Forest Service administered lands within the Mill Creek Allotment as discussed during the April 8th, 2015 meeting. Please review your Term Grazing Permit for grazing utilization, range improvement maintenance, and salting standards. Actual on-dates and off-dates are dependent on range readiness and when allowable use standards are met. The Forest Service may approve changes to the grazing rotation in consultation with the permittees to address range condition situations that may occur due to weather related circumstances.

Permitted Cattle Authorized

<u>Permittee</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Non-Use</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Season</u>	<u>Brand</u>
Don Phillips/Rocky Ross	554	0	554	7/1-9/30	

<u>Grazing Unit Rotation</u>	<u>Estimated Days</u>	
Squaw Creek	15	7/1-7/15
Mill Creek	12	7/16-7/27
Smithie Fork	17	7/28-8/13
Timber Creek	18	8/14-8/31
Horse Lake	12	9/1-9/12
Cub Canyon	13	9/13-9/25

Total Days

A Range Rider must be on the allotment 5 days a week.

Particular attention needs to focus on preventing cattle drifting out of the Timber Creek unit in the areas of Timber Creek Pass and Snow Bank Meadows onto the Leadore and Pahsimeroi sides of the allotment boundary.

The following standards will apply within this allotment:

<u>End of Season Standard</u>				
<u>Unit</u>	<u>Median Greenline Stubble Height</u>	<u>Bank Alteration</u>	<u>Woody Browse</u>	<u>Upland Utilization</u>
Squaw Creek	≥ 4 inches	NA	≤ 25%	≤ 50%
Mill Creek	≥ 4 inches	20%	≤ 25%	≤ 50%
Smithie Fork	≥ 4 inches	15%	≤ 25%	≤ 50%
Timber Creek	≥ 4 inches	NA	≤ 25%	≤ 50%
Horse Lake				
Little Lost	≥ 6 inches	NA	≤ 25%	≤ 50%
Spring Meadow	≥ 4 inches	NA	≤ 25%	≤ 50%
Cub Canyon	NA	NA	≤ 25%	≤ 50%

A Notice of Non-Compliance was issued to the permittees on the Mill Creek Allotment in 2013 for **failure to keep cattle within the scheduled units during scheduled time periods**. There were issues with livestock being found on the allotment before they were authorized to graze and specialists visited the allotment to assess the impacts of this. There were also issues with cattle being in units at times outside of the scheduled dates.

The following actions and timeframes for accomplishment are required of you to remedy the non-compliance:

1. In 2014, all livestock are to be kept in the scheduled pasture and on the allotment according to the 2013 BA and 2014 AOI or direction from myself or a rangeland management specialist as adjustments are made throughout the season.

The actions required for the Notice of Non-Compliance in 2013 were met in the 2014 grazing season.

The NEPA process has been completed and implementation has begun on the fence to remove livestock grazing from Warm Creek in the lower corner of the Squaw Creek Unit. The new construction is done and the old fence on the outside corner needs to have wire spacing adjusted and a smooth bottom wire installed to replace the existing barbed wire. Then the fence will need to be marked with Sage-grouse fence markers. At that point the project will be complete. The fence is in your permit and will be maintained by the permittee.

In 2013 the Forest completed consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the Mill Creek allotment. End of season 4-inch stubble height on hydric sedges & grasses is required along the greenline of riparian areas in all areas except the Little Lost River portion of the Horse Lake unit where it is a 6-inch stubble height. There is a bank alteration standard being implemented starting this season. The Smithie Fork unit has a 15% alteration standard and the Mill Creek Unit has a 20% alteration standard on Mill Creek and Bear Creek. We will meet with you in the field to help you understand what this means and what it looks like on the ground. A patchy or uneven use pattern along the greenline will usually result in stubble height standard being met. While adequate regrowth may occur under average growing season conditions, the opposite may be true during below average conditions. Special attention should be made to drier weather conditions. It is recommended a stubble height trigger above 4 inches be used in drier conditions to plan cattle moves.

The NRCS SNOTEL sites across the Lost River Ranger District currently range from 64-90% of the Water Year average through the month of March. The Moonshine SNOTEL site is currently at 90% of average. All indications show that cumulative drought impacts could persist or worsen this year. If this occurs the Forest Service expects that cattle may need to be moved more quickly through units and removed prior to the scheduled off date. Forage production is dependent on growing season (April through September) temperatures and precipitation. Even when drought conditions subside there is a lag time for plants to physically recover from the stress of the drought.

The drier mesic meadows adjacent to streams and springs should be watched to ensure that 50% use is not exceeded. These meadows are of concern across the district and more focus is going to be put on use levels in these areas. While all adjacent meadows should be looked at, the drier meadows have less chance of regrowth and therefore are of highest concern. The upland annual use level of 50% should be used to manage the dry meadows and your rangeland management specialist will work with you to determine when a desired use level has been met, so that everyone understands what the meadows should look like after livestock use.

Riparian areas with greenlines dominated by Kentucky bluegrass and tufted hairgrass should also receive special attention to achieve end of season stubble height. Greenlines dominated by these plants have less bank stability than those dominated by deep-rooted plants and are sometimes in a lower state of ecological condition. They should be managed to increase the amount of stable hydric sedges, grasses, and shrubs where appropriate.

Other factors should be considered for planning cattle moves between units. These include prevention of stream bank trampling, increase in rate of stubble height removal, changes in grazing preference from grasses and grass-like plants to young willows and other shrubs, large groups of cattle congregating in fence corners, at gates, or riparian areas for long periods of time.

Cleaning Grazing Units: Livestock need to begin moving from a unit prior to the stubble height standard being met to ensure allowable use standards are met. This is especially important during drought conditions. In most cases 7 days should be adequate. Permittees should be prepared to assist range riders in checking that the unit cleaned stays clean. Range riders should keep permittees informed of problems cleaning grazed units. Bulls should be kept with the main herd or removed from the allotment when they disrupt herd management. Frequent back-riding indicates there is a herd management problem. It is also the permittee's responsibility to correct problems caused by drift from other units. The Smithie Fork Unit should be cleaned of livestock by August 15 and the Timber Creek Unit by August 31 every year.

Fence & Water Improvements: Please refer to Part 3 of your Term Grazing Permit. Allotment boundary fences should be maintained prior to cattle entering the allotment, interior fences should also be maintained prior cattle entering a new unit. Existing improvements should be maintained each year before requesting new improvements.

Weed Free Hay: In accordance with State Law, please ensure that range riders bring hay that is certified and tagged noxious weed free.

Grazing Fees: The grazing fees for the 2015 season are \$1.69/head month. Your grazing fee payment will need to be received prior to turning livestock out on the National Forest.

Actual Use Report: An Actual Use Report will be mailed to you shortly after cattle leave the allotment. Please notify this office when cattle are removed from the allotment. The association President will need to provide a consolidated report with dates when cattle entered the allotment, when the main herd was moved from unit to unit, when cattle were removed from the allotment. Each permittee will need to provide an individual report with dates when their cattle entered and left the allotment. Please return the report 2 weeks after it's received to help expedite billing credits for next season and provide data for end of season reports.

Questions and assistance regarding these instructions should be directed to Josh Edwards at work (208) 588-3405.